

Moshe Shulman

# Seven Prophetesses

(2016)

This piece was made possible by a grant from the 2015 Fromm Music Foundation

Moshe Shulman

# Seven Prophetesses

(2016)

for Soprano, Harp and  
String Quartet

Based on poems by  
Juli Varshavsky

Full Score

## Performance Notes

The lyrics are in modern Hebrew (written in International Phonetic Alphabet - IPA)

No.1 (Miriam) and No.6 (Hannah) should be ended with an 'attaca', leading to the following movements without stopping.

No.5 (Sarah): the underlined notes at the beginning of this movement, and in similar passages that follow refer to bow length.  
Follow precisely the indicated bow lengths.

Duration: approx. 20 minutes

## Program Notes

Seven biblical female prophetesses: Miriam, Hulda, Esther, Avigail, Sarah, Hannah, and Deborah, are portrayed in songs by the young Israeli composer Moshe Shulman. Inspiration for the piece emerged through conversation with Dr. Anne Harley, founder and director of Voices of the Pearl, about setting text by and about female esoterics from world traditions throughout history to reclaim their lost voices and the tradition of female spirituality.

Before the spirits of these women could be brought to life through music, poet Juli Varshavsky was invited to develop his most reflective text about these famous yet inaccessible women. Where information about the women was limited, Juli filled in with intuition and imagination. The result of this reflection: seven fine poems, from which the composer extracted the most important lines to set music to.

The use of both biblical and modern Hebrew language creates a more authentic character in the vocalist and overall ambience of this piece. In addition to usage of the Hebrew language, the music incorporates many Jewish elements as well. The augmented second, an interval found in modes and melodies of Eastern European Jewish Klezmer music, can be found throughout the piece. Another important element in the piece is the use of the mordent, a rapid alternation of a note with the note immediately below or above it in the scale. This ornamentation is common in klezmer instrumental music and imitates cantorial singing. Similarly to cantors that were expected to adhere to a higher level of artistry as well as emotional intensity, the singer in Seven Prophetesses is also expected to treat the texts with greater freedom and expressivity with the use of more elaborate virtuosic display, occasionally absorbing influences from contemporary music.

**Seven Prophetess** (seven movements)  
were premiered and recorded on march 30-31, 2017  
at The 2017 John Donald Robb Composer's Symposium  
by:  
Anne Harley, Soprano  
Barbara Pöschl-Edrich, harp  
Miranda Shulman, violin I  
David Felberg, violin II  
Shanti Randall, viola  
James Holland, cello  
  
conducted by Moshe Shulman

1.Miriam	מִרְיָם	2.Huldah	חולדה	3.Esther	iii אסתר
The sea opens its waves,	הַיָּם פִּתַּח אֶת גִּלְיָו,	The city is sewed in dry snow,	הָעִיר תִּפְוּרָה בְּשֶׁלֶג הַיָּבֵשׁ	Who will blow the shofar For the virgins of Shushan?	מִי יִתְקַע בְּשׁוֹפָר לְבַתּוּלוֹת הָעִיר שׁוּשָׁן?
Kneels and groans,	כּוֹרֵעַ וּפּוֹעֵד,	And there is nothing left but wrath,	וְלֹא נוֹתַר דָּבָר מִלֵּבָד חֲמָה,		
And over the body drops of milk	וְעַל הַגּוּף אֲגָלִי תֵּלֵב	At the end of my life the conquering ice	בַּקֶּצֶה תִּלְדִּי הַתִּרַח הַכּוֹבֵשׁ	Who will remember your name, My name, Their name?	מִי יִזְכֹּר אֶת שְׁמִי, אֶת שְׁמִי, אֶת שְׁמִי?
Drain in a wandering path.	נִקְוִים בְּשִׁבִּיל תּוֹעֵד.	Turned to solace.	הִפָּדָה לְאַחֲמָה	Who will fast?	מִי יִצּוֹם?
Bleeds in the desert sand,	שׁוֹתֵת בַּחוּל הַמִּדְבָּרִי,	Bared feet step in the frost,		The girls are being dragged Through the streets of the capital To be adorned with crown.	הַנְּעוּרוֹת נִמְשָׁכוֹת בַּקָּרְעִים בְּרַחוּבוֹת הַבִּירָה לְהַתְעַשֵּׂר בְּקֶמֶר.
Streams in a dance,	נוֹכֵעַ בַּמַּחֲוֹל,	The city surrenders to the stabbing whiteness,	הַבָּרָד נִבְגַּע לִלְבֹן הַדּוֹקֵר,		
Wraps with fetus blood	עוֹטֵף בְּדָם הַעֲבָרִי	The wrinkles of the memory freeze in the skin	קַמִּשְׁתִּי הַנּוֹבְרָן קוֹפְאִים בְּעוֹר בְּדָרְדָר לְהִתְקַמֵּר.	I am Hadassah the daughter of Woman with no name. Under the tree of fifty cubits I was anointed with the seed of my people To rule over The people with no God.	אֲנִי הַדַּסָּה בַת אִשָּׁה לֹא שֵׁם. מִתַּת הָעֵץ חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה נִמְשַׁחְתִּי בְּזֵרַע עַמִּי לְמַלְךְ עַל עַם לֹא אֱלֹ.
In the blue outflow.	בְּשֶׁפֶד הַבְּחוּל.	And at the beginning there was nothing,	וּבִרְאשִׁית כָּבֵד לֹא הָיָה דָּבָר,	Who will cast the pur? Even the oil of myrrh won't wipe The blood from the scroll. And on the fifteenth day of the month Adar, Who will say the Kaddish?	מִי יִטִּיל אֶת הַפּוֹר? גַּם שֶׁמֶן הַמָּר לֹא יִמְחֶה אֶת הַדָּם מִהַמְּגִלָּה. וּבַיּוֹם חֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ אֲדַר מִי יִקְרָא אֶת הַקַּדִּישׁ?
Felled from umbilical cord,	נִכְרַת מִתְּחֵב הַשֶּׁבֶר,	On the way to abandonment.			
Drawn out from the oblivion,	נִשְׁלָה מִתְּהַלְשִׁיחַ,	And there is no hope in the ashamed dawn,	וְאִין תִּקְוָה בַּשָּׁמֶר הַתִּזְלָם,		
The sea cuts the connection	הַיָּם חוֹתֵךְ אֶת הַתְּבוּר	And the world was deaf and already	וְהַעוֹלָם הָיָה תָּשׁוּ, וְכָבֵד אִין כְּבִי בְּעוֹלָם.		
To the savior hand.	לְיַד הַמוֹשִׁיעֵה.	There is no crying in the world.			
And the billow flows dropped	וְהַנְּחָשׁוּל זֹרֵם שְׁמוֹט				
In the shadow of milk and honey,	בְּצֵל תֵּלֵב וְדָבֵשׁ,				
The last one to die here,	הָאַחֲרוֹן שֶׁבָּאן יָמוּת				
Will ruin the temple.	יַחְרִיב אֶת הַמִּקְדָּשׁ.				

4.Abigail	אַבִּיגַיִל	5.Sarah	שָׂרָה	7. The Song of Deborah	שִׁירַת דְּבוֹרָה
Cast your weight into my eyes	הִטַּל אֶת מִשְׁקָלְךָ אֶל תּוֹךְ עֵינַי,	On a hook at the tent entrance I'll hang A thwarted and circumcised smile, On the floor in a pool of alcohol I'll let my laughter wither.	אֶתְּלָה עַל הוּ בִּקְשַׁת הָאֶתֶל חִיידָה נֶעְקֵד וְנִמְלֹל, עַל הַרְצָפָה בְּשִׁלּוּלִית שֶׁל כְּתָל אֶמַּח לְצַחוּקִי לְקַמֵּל.	I'll put my head on leaking soil, And when I lie down with you I'll be a woman, Jael, my skin is burning, the soft fire Will lead me to a new land.	אֶנִּיחַ אֶת רֹאשִׁי עַל אֲדָמָה נוֹטְפָת, וּבִשְׂכָבִי עִמָּךְ אֶהְיֶה אִשָּׁה, יַעַל, עוֹרִי בּוֹעֵר, הָאֵשׁ הַמִּלְשִׁטָּה, תּוֹכִיל אוֹתִי לְאַרְצוֹ חֲדָשָׁה.
Like a sling stone that slays the body,	כַּמּוֹ אֲבִי קֹלַעִי שִׁקוּלִית גּוֹרֵי,	I'll obey your voice and I'll take the knife, I'll sacrifice a great nation as a burnt offering, In a twisted movement I'll miscarry my womb, And I'll be a bereaved mother.	אֲשַׁמַּע בְּקוֹלְךָ וְאֶשַׁח מֵאַבְקָת אֶעֱלֶה גּוֹי גָּדוֹל לְעוֹלָה, וְאֶפִּיל אֶת רִחְמִי בַּחֲנֻעָה מִעֲשָׂקָת, וְאֶהְיֶה לְאִם שְׂכוֹלָה.	And when I kneel, you will touch my homeland, And with your tongue do wonders as you will, My cry has melted, I'm shivering, Your naked skin covers me.	וּבִאֲשֶׁר אֶכְרַע, תִּגְעֵי לִי בַּמּוֹלָדָת, וּבְלִשְׁוֹנֶה עֲשִׂי עַמִּי שְׂפָטִים, צַעֲקָתִי נִמְסָה, אֲנִי רוֹעָדָת, עוֹרְךָ הַמִּתְּהַרְטֵל עוֹטֵף אוֹתִי.
Turn the minutes into zealous day.	כַּמּוֹ נִכְרַע הַעוֹמֵד בְּסִנִּי סוּגִי,	הִפָּדָה אֶת הַדְּרוֹת לְיוֹם קָנָאִי.		Kiss me with thy milk and we'll surrender to the urge, And when you rise with me, be a woman, Under the blanket we discovered a land, That will not rest and will not know shame.	נִשְׁקוּנִי בְּתֵלֵב, וְנִבְגַּע לְפָרִיז, וּבְקוֹמָה עִמִּי הִי אִשָּׁה, מִתַּת הַשְּׂמֹכָה גִּלְיָנוּ אֲרִיז, שׁוּלָא תִשְׁלָט, וְלֹא תִדַּע בּוֹשָׁה.
Set your heart behind my mountains,	הִשֵּׁם לְבָבְךָ מַעֲבָר לְהָרִי,				
Discover my night, rule over there,	גִּלְהֵ לַיְלִי, הִנֵּה בָּהּ בִּגְדִיד,				
Hold the beating light by the edge of the sinew,	הִחֲזֵק בְּאוֹר פּוֹעֵם בְּקַצֵּה הַגִּיד,				
When the dawn comes, return to be a novice.	עַם בּוֹא הַשָּׁמֶר שׁוֹב לְהִיּוֹת מוֹכֵרֵאִי.				
Allow your body to be flexible sand,	הִנָּח לְגוֹף לְהִיּוֹת לַחוּל גַּמִּישׁ,				
Like a wanderer that solves the mystery	כַּמּוֹ הַלֵּךְ הַפּוֹתֵר אֶת הַחִידָה				
Undo my thighs from the secret of the menstrual blood,	הִתַּר שׁוֹקוֹי מִסֵּתֶר דָּם גָּדָה,				
Love me now, be no-man.	אֱהוֹב אוֹתִי עַכְשָׁיו, הִנֵּה שׁוּם-אִישׁ.				
					Excerpts of poems by permission of
					<u>Juli Varshavski</u>

# 1 Miriam - מִרְיָם

ותקח מִרְיָם תִּבְיָאָה אֲחֹת אַהֲרֹן, אֶת-הַתֵּף--בְּיָדָהּ; וַתֵּצֵאנָה כָּל-הַנְּשִׁים אֲחֵרֹת, בְּתַפִּים וּבְמִנְחֹלֹת.  
And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand;  
and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.  
(Exodus 15:20)

Lyrics: Juli Varshavsky

Moshe Shulman (b.1978)

$\text{♩} = 66-74$   
++|+|++

Harp  
metallic pick  
*f*

Soprano  
*f*  
*p*  
fia - 'iam  
The sea

Violin I  
*f*  
pizz.

Violin II  
*f*  
pizz.  
3

Viola  
*f*  
pizz.

Violoncello  
*f*  
pizz.

3

Hp.  
S.  
po - 't3 - - ah  
o - pens  
3t ga-'lav  
its waves,  
ko -  
Kneels

Vln. I

Vln. II  
3

Vla.

Vc.

5

Hp.

S.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

'R<sub>3</sub> - a u - fo - 'v<sub>3</sub> v<sub>3</sub> - al  
and gro - ans, and o -

7

Hp.

S.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ord.

ver fia - 'guf  
the bo - dy

9

Hp. *sf* *sf* *sf* *f*

S. *mf* *sf* *D $\flat$*  *D $\natural$*

3g - 'lei 3g - 'lei ha - 'lav  
drops drops of milk

Vln. I ord. (pizz.) *3*

Vln. II ord. (pizz.) *3*

Vla. arco *mf* arco

Vc. *mf*

12

Hp. *f* *f* *f*

S. *f* *f* *f*

F $\sharp$  C $\sharp$  F $\sharp$  F $\flat$  E $\flat$

n3k Drain in 'vim bi a wan 'svil de -

Vln. I *f* *3*

Vln. II *f* *3* *3*

Vla. *f*

Vc. *f*

meno mosso  $\text{♩} = 76$ [illegible]